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Number 1

GOVERNING AND 'UNGOVERNABILITY'
A Sceptical Inquiry

By

Professor Richard Rose



Centre for the Study of Public Policy

University of Strathclyde
Glasgow

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF PUBLIC POLICY

Director: Professor Richard Rose Associate Director: Kevin J. Allen

University of Strathclyde

McCance Building, Richmond Street,

Glasgow G1 1XQ



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Summary

The problem of 'ungovernability', so called, is a problem of political authority, specifically, a challenge to government as we have known it in fully legitimate Western nations. Two of the problems that can arise are general--organized complexity and loads upon resources. The problem of governing is to avoid the increasingly complex institutions of the modern state from becoming inefficiently overcomplex, and the claims upon economic resources from 'overloading' the political economy. Value conflicts arising from nonbargainable and conflicting claims by political elites are relatively rare today, but extremely disruptive where found, e.g. Northern Ireland. Citizen indifference to government represents a novel, and potentially more pervasive challenge to the effectiveness of government, as well as to allegiance. The difficulties described are not mutually exclusive; in particular, overcomplexity and citizen indifference together can create organized incompetence, and overloading of government could conceivably lead to value conflicts, if there is no agreement about the making of cuts in living standards.

After Beatrice and Sidney Webb returned from a visit to Russia in the 1920s, they described to a Bloomsbury audience their meeting with Leon Trotsky, then in exile at Prinkipo.

Trotsky told them that their ideas of Fabian gradualness in Britain were an illusion. In the long run there would be revolution, with shooting in the streets, hanging from lamp-posts, rivers of blood and all the rest of the conventional scenario.

One of those present asked: 'And what did you say to him?'

In the voice of a high-born schoolmistress, Mrs. Webb replied: 'We told him: No.'

Reason scrutinizes prophecies of doom as severely as prophecies of eternal abundance. The popularity of political pessimism in the 1970s is no more proof that the future is dark than the optimism of the 1960s was proof that this decade would have the horn of plenty as its emblem. To disprove a forecast of plenty or of peril does not, however, establish the truth of its opposite; it only justifies a sceptic's doubt.

Analytically, the concept of ungovernability is a nonsense. The question is not whether we shall be governed but how. A modern Western society can no more do without the authority of government than it could do without money as a medium of exchange. Ungovernability can only be a temporary phase of anarchy and of civil war in the career of a political system. Such a phase must be followed, for better or worse, by the establishment of a new regime, or by the restoration in some form of the regime under challenge.

The inevitability of government has as a corollary the inevitability of political problems, for politics concerns disagreements about collective action in society. The evidence of political problems can be found everywhere in the Western world today. The 'events' of 1968 called attention to the contingent nature of allegiance to authority within society; the 1971 dollar devaluation signalled a shift in economic relations among Western nations; economic recession and inflation have been other symptoms of economic disturbance. The Arab oil embargo of 1973 forced a shift in economic relations between Western and non-Western nations. The years since have been marked by a practical and intellectual quest for concepts to describe what is happening and to explain what we seem to see, and for theories to predict what the consequences may be of these troubles.

This paper starts from the assumption that contemporary problems of Western nations are challenging to social scientists as well as to politicians. In default of concepts that are both analytically precise and empirically relevant, we are left with the unattractive alternatives of abstract reasoning, or 'woolly' editorializing. Can analytic concepts of political science developed in the optimistic decade of the 1960s be used to describe contemporary events, or do we need newer (or older) concepts for this purpose?

The first section of this paper outlines basic concepts required for discussing the so-called 'governability' problem. The succeeding four sections consider different types of challenges that government faces today--organized overcomplexity, overloaded resources, value conflicts, and citizen indifference. The concluding section considers the most important meta-problems arising from the conjunction

of these difficulties.

I THE FRAMEWORK OF AUTHORITY

The basic issue which the 'ungovernability' literature addresses is the authority of government, that is, the relationship between a governing regime and the population from whom it seeks compliance and diffuse support.¹ The problem of authority is perennial. A distinctive feature of the present is that social scientists are now worrying in print about the authority of government in modern, industrial societies such as Britain, France, Italy and the United States, countries where it has been taken for granted that democratic electoral competition provides a stable base for fully legitimate government. This is not the only way in which governments can rule. Studies of Latin American, African or Asian countries are not so much about legitimate authority, as about effective authority. Northern Ireland is exceptional in the Western world as a place without a legitimate political authority at present. Social scientists, however, often prefer to define the civil war there as something other than a challenge to political authority, or else pretend it is not 'really' a part of the Western world.

'Ungovernability' can be meaningfully defined as the problems thrown up by challenges to the authority of fully legitimate governments. The worries that are being expressed are not about a relapse into anarchy, but rather, about threats to the continuance of government as we have known it for the past generation. Such challenges are often presented negatively as an attack upon an established regime. It is equally important to consider what alternatives there are to a fully legitimate government, enjoying both diffuse support and voluntary compliance with its basic political laws. In other words, in what direction can the

dynamics of political authority lead? A regime that loses both support and compliance is heading for repudiation. If it loses voluntary support but can maintain compliance from unwilling citizens, it can exercise coercive authority. The problem of isolated authority--support without compliance--is more likely to arise in a poor, traditional society than in the West today. The effective alternatives to fully legitimate government are two: coercion or repudiation. A repudiated regime falls, from a revolution or an internal or external coup, because of a lack of power to compel compliance, and values justifying support. By contrast, a coercive regime stands firm; it has no problem of 'ungovernability', in the sense of non-compliance; it is characterized by too much power and too little support.

To define political authority in terms of both support and compliance captures twin concerns of politics. Democracy is concerned with freely given popular endorsement of governors. Citizens must approve how they are governed, even though they cannot be expected to approve of every act taken by constitutional means. 'Ungovernability' refers to the inability of government to get citizens to do what government wants, 'unruliness' or 'loss of power'.² This concern is consistent with an older tradition of political theory in which order, rather than popular rule is the first object of government.

Because the authority of regimes concerns a relationship between governors and governed, it is important to consider challenges coming from either or both of two very different sources. On the one hand, they may come from within the political elite. Compliance with basic political laws may break down among the elite, as in Watergate or, alternatively, support may be withdrawn from the regime, by many who are given positions within it, as in the collapse of the Fourth French Republic. Alternatively, challenges to authority can come from difficulties within the environment.

It may face resistance from citizens refusing to comply with laws or show allegiance. Alternatively, it may fail to affect the environment as it wants, for example, make the economy grow, or hostile countries suffer defeat in a war.

The discussion about 'ungovernability' is concerned with the ability of government to influence the larger environment of which it is a part as well as its citizens. While compliance follows logically from popular support for a regime, the effectiveness of a government in controlling the environment does not necessarily follow. A fully legitimate government can have problems in industrial relations, economic growth, winning a war, or simply, delivering the mail promptly. Hence, in this paper, we must be concerned not only with normative support, but also with output effectiveness, that is, the ability of government to achieve policies directed at its environment. This adaptation of concepts is entirely consistent with references to the 'loss of power' or 'loss of impact' found in writings about ungovernability. In the words of the Trilateral Commission, "In some measure, governability and democracy are warring concepts. An excess of democracy means a deficit in governability; easy governability suggests faulty democracy."³

Figure 1 Four Types of 'Ungovernability' or Challenges to Authority

<u>From</u>	<u>Output Effectiveness</u>	<u>Normative Challenge to support</u>
Political Elites	1) ORGANIZED OVERCOMPLEXITY	3) VALUE CONFLICT
Environment	2) OVERLOADED RESOURCES	4) CITIZEN INDIFFERENCE

Combining the distinctions between normative support and effectiveness and political elites and the environment results in a fourfold typology of challenges to authority. (See Figure 1)

(1) Organized Over-Complexity results from the inability of officials inside government to control their own actions sufficiently to make an effective impact upon society. (2) The problems of Overloaded Resources arise when a government seeks to consume more than the society can produce. If the former is a problem of organizational behaviour, the latter is a problem of political economy. In these categories, no normative challenge to authority is necessarily implied. (3) When Value Conflicts arise within the political elite, it is easy to see the political antagonisms involved. What is often overlooked is the fact that the antagonists, by their very engagement with a common problem of governing, are disputing how authority should be exercised or who should exercise it; they are not challenging the need for a fully effective regime.⁴ (4) Citizen Indifference by contrast, expresses an unwillingness to support the existing regime or an alternative. When ideologues engage in disputes, indifferent citizens can shrug their shoulders, using their wiles to give any regime difficulties in its efforts to govern.

Because the problems raised by the literature of challenges to authority are vast, the following pages concentrate upon novel elements of the 1970s causing governors trouble today. After characterizing each challenge, their consequences will be considered, for writers about 'ungovernability' assume that the difficulties of today are but a harbinger of greater challenges to political authority tomorrow.

II ORGANIZED OVERCOMPLEXITY

The government of a modern society is by definition a complex organization, consisting of a large number of clearly differentiated parts, carrying out more or less well defined activities in the name of

a common collective authority. The purpose of organization is to enable a society to do collectively what its members cannot do as individuals. Complex organization is intended to enable government to do many things simultaneously. To diagnose Western governments as suffering from overcomplexity is to assert that the continuing growth of government has led to the point at which further growth results in rapidly diminishing marginal returns, or even in decreasing its aggregate effectiveness.⁵

The general model implied is of government as a communications network. The more complex government becomes, the longer the lines of communication within government, and the more important it is that one hand of an N-handed octopus knows what other hands are doing. Insofar as organization requires the subdivision of government into a multiplicity of units to deal with different aspects of a single problem (e.g., poverty, energy or the environment) then the need for internal communication increases disproportionately, because the actions of different parts of government are interdependent. But the need to push an increasing number of messages through a set of institutions where the nodal points remain relatively constant in size--Parliament, Cabinet or a Minister's office--creates an information overload. In default of simplifying these institutions, the long-term consequence would be a 'nervous breakdown' of the nerves of government.⁶

One cause of organizational overcomplexity can be diagnosed as the growth of government, whatever indicator is used. In every Western nation, the number and proportion of government employees has increased substantially since the war, and so too has the size of public expenditure, both as in absolute terms and as a share of a country's Gross National Product. The number of central government departments has been growing too.⁷ Governments are trying to do more things, to help more people, and to do so at a higher standard than ever before. The growth of government

reflects in part a 'demand push', as individual incomes have risen in a period of affluence, the demand for public goods and services--universities, health care, anti-pollution measures and amenities--has risen disproportionately. Growth also reflects the influence of producers--teachers, nurses or other public employees--in lobbying for public funds, and the ability of government to find the fiscal resources to meet these demands.

Because organizations 'institutionalize' decisions from the past, they do not necessarily adapt well to changing social conditions. The relative rigidity of government institutions intensifies overcomplexity, for some activities of government will reflect decisions made in circumstances no longer appropriate. Yet government agencies continue to move forward, propelled by inertia commitments. The legal status of government institutions makes it hard for them to adapt their forms or their programs without new legislative authorizations. They are thus less flexible than private sector enterprises, which may change products with fewer clearances or than social 'institutions' (sic) such as teenage culture, which are not formally organised.

Overcomplexity also arises from growing interdependence leading to the 'leakage' of sovereignty. When a national government is sovereign, it need only organize its own internal activities and priorities in making and implementing decisions. The 'leakage' of sovereignty reflects the penetration of non-governmental institutions into governmental spheres as a complement of increased intervention of national governments into more and more spheres of society. The leakage takes place in three directions: up, down and sideways. The leakage 'up' is represented in part by formal institutional arrangements, such as the European Economic Community and the International Monetary Fund as well as by the transnational trade and communications that go along with such formal links. The leakage 'down'

is represented by the growth of devolved participative institutions, mandating consultative processes for the review of government actions, a process that may or may not be benign, but is certainly costly in terms of increasing complexity.⁸ The leakage 'sideways' is reflected by the growth of tri-partate government, trade union and industry institutions concerned with the economy. This growing interdependence is not a simple 'loss' of sovereignty, but rather an exchange of unilateral decision-making power by national governments for a share of power in a more complex network of interdependent institutions of national and international society. In the long run, these networks may or may not strengthen collective decision-making powers. In the short run, they certainly make the task of government more complex.

Contradiction between policies is one obvious consequence of increasingly interdependent government activities. For example, a study of land use planning in Britain found that often the two sides appearing at a tribunal to contest a major dispute were both public authorities, e.g., a nationalized industry wishing to build a new generating station in a rural area, and a county council wishing to preserve green fields--each acting in the name of the public interest. In commenting upon the extremely sophisticated Swedish process for managing a mixed economy, Lindbeck notes that the government's policy cycle sometimes runs against and sometimes parallel with the pure business cycle: "It should be no surprise that this complicated set of policy targets has created serious problems of economic policy in recent years by increasing risks of serious conflicts of goals."⁹ Contradictions among social preferences are not new. What is new is that government is increasingly expected to represent both sides in the conflict, as well as 'square the circle' by resolving such disputes.

A second consequence of increasing complexity is that the opportunities for co-ordination by political leaders are reduced, as a fixed number of leading politicians will have less time and knowledge to devote to any one of a growing number of problems. As a result, leaders may fail to exercise their powers effectively, or authoritative decisions may be made by a combination of bureaucratic officials and pressure group spokesmen, who lack formal authority, but can effectively make 'sub-optimal' decisions.¹⁰ The sum total of piecemeal satisfactions can further complicate the already complicated skein of inertia commitments by which government is bound.

An important and often overlooked implication of organized overcomplexity is that the resulting ineffectiveness of organized power actually increases the freedom of choice for individual citizens. In a sense, the more the government (and other corporate institutions) try to mobilize citizens, the more they risk demobilizing them, because large organizations can only set parameters, but not control what individuals do. When individuals are faced with organizations with contradictory or unco-ordinated objectives, they can 'shop around' for the best programs and organizations that are offering them benefits or release from obligations, secure in the knowledge that the inability of organizations to co-ordinate activities leaves them at an advantage. For example, a professional accountant is trained to advise well-to-do clients to 'shop around' for the best mixture of income and expenses that will maximize tax avoidance, under a set of laws that leave loopholes (and unintended injustices) because of their complexity. Insofar as government's authority is not considered to help citizens but to control them to their disadvantage, then government incompetence is itself welcome.

III OVERLOADED RESOURCES

Even if government could organize itself with total efficiency, it could not expect to achieve everything for society that politicians

might dream of, or promise to their electorate. Projects organized within government will be of no effect, if the 'projectors' have forgotten the limitations of resources and knowledge.

Club of Rome prophecies of ecological doom emphasize the finite nature of earth's resources in the most dramatic form. The more effective a government is today in carrying out policies that consume resources, the more difficult the tasks of its own successor a generation or two hence, when resources are exhausted. Resources are finite, however only if we assume that our knowledge of the earth and its atmosphere is already complete, the technology for utilizing these resources is fixed, and their relative prices constant. Criticisms of Club of Rome-type studies have demonstrated, historically as well as theoretically, that this is not the case.¹¹

The immediate resource limit to the effectiveness of government is summed up in the economist's expression: 'There is no such thing as a free lunch'. Whatever actions the government takes consume some resources, whether fiscal, material, organizational, or even intangible political 'capital'. Of particular relevance is the size of a nation's Gross National Product, for this pecuniary measure of national wealth sets a limit in real terms upon the sums that government can extract as taxes to pay for its growing activities. The rise of the Mixed Economy Welfare State created inertia commitments laid down in statute law. The expectations of increased government activity are also embodied in the minds of politicians. Whatever their nominal ideology and statements out of office, politicians in office appear to become 'hyperthyroid' once in office, spending more and more money in an anxious desire to prove that they are doing something. Whether they can continue to govern in this manner indefinitely depends upon whether the money is there. Since

the early 1950s, economic growth has provided a 'fiscal dividend', financing increased public expenditure, while also permitting private post-tax earnings to rise. But the pattern of political economy in the 1970s is very different: it shows a declining rate of growth in GNP, and an accelerating rate of growth in public spending.¹²

In theory, technology could be invoked to improve the efficiency of government, allowing it to substitute increased effectiveness for extra resources, when the resources are not forthcoming. But the problems of organized overcomplexity illustrate many obstacles to doing this within government, and, that government itself can be a source of declining efficiency. In conditions of declining efficiency, a government must levy greater taxes upon resources that might otherwise be devoted to investment in order to provide a constant sum of goods and services. The relative price effect, driving up the cost of labour-intensive public sector services by comparison with the private sector, also makes cost-cutting unrealistic.

The limits of knowledge constitute another important constraint upon many of the contemporary social priorities of government. Social objectives cannot be achieved with the ease of engineering objectives, for there is not an effective technology to control many aspects of social relations, as there is in the physical world. That is why it is easier to put a man on the moon than it is to eliminate poverty or build houses rather than eliminate the family problems of slum dwellers.¹³ Many of the most expensive and the most rapidly growing programs of governments are no more than inputs to a complex process of social relationships. The influences determining the social outputs can be grouped under three broad headings: those controlled by government, those reflecting purposeful extra-governmental activities, and those covered by the 'error' term, that is, circumstances that social scientists cannot identify. Insofar as the government defines social problems in

pecuniary terms, e.g. the elderly or working poor need money, then it can be effective simply by providing money; the administration of old-age pensions demonstrates how well government can write checks to give away money. But if the problems cannot be solved by money, then government can only provide goods and services--schools, hospitals, community centres, and teachers, doctors and social workers--in the hope that these inputs will have some positive effect in terms of learning, the reduction of ill health or the creation of 'good' communities .

The limits of political economy concentrate attention upon the allocation of a given amount of resources within a society. This is a question of allocating resources between public and private sectors, as well as between different strata and groups within society. By definition, the Mixed Economy Welfare State presupposes the existence of a significant private as well as a significant public sector. The past half-century has laid the ghost of 19th century laissez faire liberalism, based upon free market economics and the Night-watchmen state. It remains to be seen whether the continued growth of government spending will lead to the demise of a mixed economy, as the proportion of GNP allocated by the public sector rises, reducing the private sector to a dependent or interstitial position. Additionally or alternatively, increased government spending could spell the end of 'double affluence', that is, continued growth in both public sector revenue and private post-tax earnings. For the past quarter-century, the fiscal dividend of growth has provided a political solvent, allowing government and citizens both to enjoy some of the fruits of greater national wealth. High levels of current public spending and low rates of growth are creating a squeeze; even if government took all the money generated by economic growth, this would not be sufficient on present trends to allow public spending to grow without a real cut in private earnings. Among major

countries, Britain and Italy face this challenge most immediately, but Sweden, the United States, and even Germany, are not exempt from the risk of this happening. Temporarily, Western governments have sought to sustain resources overloaded by commitments through deficits financed by a mixture of loans and the inflationary expansion of the money supply. As long as government retains economic credibility, reliance upon inflation tactic can temporarily ease the position of a government under pressure. But it builds up future challenges to economic effectiveness and conceivably political risks as well.

IV VALUE CONFLICT

When social scientists write about Western nations to describe politics as the reconciliation of value conflicts, there is usually implicit the assumption that the conflicts in question can be reconciled within the existing constitutional order. As the history of Europe in the first half of the 20th century makes clear, value conflicts can easily challenge the authority of the regime. Today, Northern Ireland is the only area within the universe of Western nations where value conflicts take the familiar form of civil war between a congeries of guerilla armies, with government not only lacking full legitimacy, but also a claim to the monopoly of force, legitimate or otherwise.

Value conflicts are about the substance of politics, and not about the procedures for resolving conflicts.¹⁴ Conflicts that cannot be resolved within conventional democratic institutions are non-bargainable. The values are stated in zero-sum terms, so that the realization of a value by one group, for example, racial segregation, would mean defeat for another, favouring racial integration. When value conflicts concern collective goods, all must share in the decisions made, for people cannot decide for themselves whether they wish to be at war with a neighbouring

state or not, as they may decide how to buy different foods. In circumstances where one decision must be applied collectively, then "He who says collective goods says public evils."¹⁵ A third characteristic of non-bargainable conflicts is that protagonists state their views in absolute terms, as for example, in the old maxim: fiat justitia, ruant coeli.

Historically, the great challenges to the authority of the European state have come from non-bargainable differences about religion, language and national identity and race. The existence of such conflicts today is usually the result of the historic persistence of unique configurations of social and political conditions, rather than of novel contemporary social strains. Faith in religion as an absolute and dominant value of society has declined within churches, as well as within society at large. This is emphasized by clergymen who denounce sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland as 'unchristian', forgetting the very ground of their being in battles between Catholics and Protestants, or clericals and anti-clericals, for centuries past. The movement of armies across the landmass of Europe in the two great wars of this century and the collapse of the polyglot Habsburg Empire has done much to homogenize languages within nations, if not between them. Quebec and Brussels are today the chief points at which disagreement about language could give rise to nonbargainable value conflicts. A variety of groups in Western countries today claim distinctive national identities but most do not challenge authority and can be ignored politically on the principle of de minimis.¹⁶ In Wales, the Plaid Cymru (Welsh Nationalist Party) faces a dilemma that if it promotes support for a Welsh identity, it must play down the promotion of the Welsh language, for three-quarters of the Welsh people today do not speak Welsh. The circumstances of the Scottish National Party, momentarily the strongest Nationalist party in Europe, are exceptional. Racial

differences in the 1960s raised challenges to political authority in America, but these have been conciliated, and on different terms from the settlement of the First Reconstruction. In Europe, the nearest analogue consists of gastarbeiter, whose political status is weak.

Conventionally, social scientists describe economic differences within society as the stuff of class conflict. Economic differences are ubiquitous, but they are also bargainable. Typically, they are stated in money terms, a commodity that it is very easy to bargain about. When economic growth provides a fiscal dividend, then disputes can be settled by a non-zero sum outcome, in which both workers and employers benefit. Moreover, the infinite divisibility of national income means that the provision of benefits for some does not necessarily threaten others. For example, payment of cash benefits to the unemployed does not directly threaten the jobs of people in work. The characteristic economic disputes of the Mixed Economy Welfare State do not concern the authority of the regime, but rather, the division of the fiscal dividend of growth. Economic value conflicts only threaten authority when they are translated into disputes about the power of the state.

If a value conflict materializes in a non-bargainable form, then its consequences crucially affect political authority. Immediately the regime becomes partially rather than fully legitimate, it may introduce coercion to secure compliance among those who refuse normative support. It is often forgotten that the existence of a minority language or racial group by definition implies the existence of a majority group too. Equally, a separatist challenge implies a Unionist reaction in defence of the status quo. In a divided regime, there are two sides to a question and at least two parties to the dispute. If the divisions are about non-bargainable values, then one side must lose. If the losers will not accept defeat at the polls, those who win are likely to put effective compliance ahead of normative support, and introduce coercion,

if necessary to defend what they hold.

Logically, one way to dispose of value conflicts is to substitute another issue as the central dimension of national politics. Religious differences have not so much been resolved between different denominations as they have been replaced by economic concerns within European societies. A second way to dispose of conflicts is to separate the protagonists into two separate states. To do this would be a victory for separatists; in return, it would offer Unionists full legitimacy for the regime, experiencing some contraction in its territory. Where conflicting nationalities are intermixed territorially--as in Belfast and Brussels--then separation requires the expulsion of groups through the coerced exchange of populations, a remedy that has not been applied in modern peacetime Europe.

V CITIZEN INDIFFERENCE

When ideologues engage in value conflicts, many citizens can withdraw from the fray, shrugging their shoulders in surprise and indifference that some people take politics so seriously. Such indifference presents a distinctive challenge to political authority, for it implies that whoever controls government will not necessarily control the values or behavior of many of their citizens. The so-called apathetic masses may sit out power struggles within government, and make hollow the victory of one side, by shutting out government behind a wall of indifference.

Indifference is a cheap and easy alternative to rebellion, the safe resort of those whose values are in conflict with authority. An indifferent citizen does not need to take up arms or march against the state. He can simply turn his back upon it, and close his eyes and ears to what it commands. If government seeks to encourage saving, he can engage in panic spending. When spending is encouraged, he can save money--in his own, or another nation's currency. Indifference can

verge into illegalities, but such forms as are not meant to challenge the authority of government. Only in a totalitarian society, would it be considered a 'crime against the state' to fail to show up to work because of a hangover, or a desire for more pay than government norms allow. In the extreme case of France and Italy, large-scale tax evasion is not considered an anti-social act, let alone a political 'crime'.

Some insulation through political indifference is a sine qua non of a pluralistic democracy in which the state is powerful, but not all-powerful. Intermediate organizations, such as business corporations, trade unions, churches, universities and the media provide countervailing centres of attention, activity, loyalty and organized power. In other words, the authority of social institutions other than government can substitute for government, or provide a useful restraint against total centralization of power. Apathy can be praised as a defence against totalitarian mobilization by government.¹⁷

The new element in the contemporary situation is a social phenomenon that Scheuch has described as "a form of distance from large impersonal organizations".¹⁸ This was made spectacularly evident to social scientists by university revolts in the late 1960s, events that reflected a more general syndrome of challenge to authority in societies that are further and further removed from a deferential standestaat, if ever this was the case.¹⁹ The authors of the Trilateral Commission's The Crisis of Democracy appear to attribute this change to an excess of democracy, upsetting the balance that authority requires between leadership and followership. Writing about America, Huntington notes a second phenomenon: "Not only was there a decline in the confidence of the public in political leaders, but there was also a marked decline in the confidence of political leaders in themselves".²⁰ The career of the American Presidency, which so concerns Huntington, is atypical in Europe. But from Japan through Washington to Italy and the Netherlands,

there have been ample revelations to make ordinary citizens have reason to distrust leaders as individuals. Moreover, politicians who gloried in the credit for delivering the 'double influence' of the 1960s cannot complain if they are now popularly distrusted as the agents of an unwanted economic 'stagflation' of the 1970s.

When citizens become indifferent to or distrustful of authority, they can withdraw from a concern with large-scale organizations of society. Hippies, inhabitants of communes, proselytizers for religions old or new, and other 'dropouts' from mainstream society prefer to retreat from individual emotional involvement in the chief institutions of modern society, and the search for alternative values and lifestyles to insulate individuals from their effects. Alternatively or additionally, individuals can build up informal networks within organizations, providing positive support for their own morale, as in the face-to-face solidarity of the little platoon of infantrymen, or the insulation of bureaucrats from the exercise of authority from above, as described by Crozier.²¹

One immediate consequence of citizen indifference is that government loses effectiveness. As citizens become indifferent to the actions of government or actively distrust it, they lose much of their motivation to do what government wants. A government that can rely only upon coercion, or increasingly expensive economic incentives to get citizens to take note of its wishes and to respond positively, will soon run out of the resources to make people do what they will not do readily and voluntarily. Inflation already provides one example of this, for the growing public 'incredibility' of governmental claims to be able to manage a national economy has driven governments to try more and more methods to regulate prices and wages and induce companies and workers to produce more--with less and less effect.

A second important consequence of citizen indifference to authority is to cripple or hobble corporatist institutions, currently popular as a possible method of controlling the economic problems challenging all Western governments today. More or less formal institutions and agreements embodying the wishes of business, labor and politicians are not effective in committing each organization equally. For example, the government can pass laws as its part of a tripartite bargain, and banks can loan money to industry to invest in new plant. It is less certain whether trade unions can discipline their members to accept whatever wage settlement is agreed by corporate bodies. Nor is there an assurance that consumers will buy the goods produced by a national plan; they may even prefer cheaper or different goods produced abroad, and allowed entry by free trade networks. The government of the day may not sustain its commitments in the face of buffeting from an international economy or even more to the point, because of market pressures of an electorate that corporate institutions cannot deliver. The fate of the Dutch party system--a decade ago held up as the example of resolving problems through organized elite co-operation--is a remainder of what can happen to elite compacts when followers become indifferent to the wishes of their leaders.²²

A third important consequence of citizen indifference is that a regime loses resistance to attacks on other grounds. Indifference does not cause the collapse of authority; by definition, indifferent citizens cannot be bothered to overthrow it. But by the same token they also cannot be bothered to come to its defense, if it is challenged. The challenge may come from outside, leading either to the collapse of a regime through military defeat, a common occurrence in World War II, as in the fall of the French Third Republic. The fall of the Fourth

French Republic in a bloodless coup d'etat illustrates how indifference can make a regime vulnerable to repudiation on other grounds.

Carried to an extreme, citizen indifference to government would imply the dissolution of all general bonds of social loyalty. In the absence of an effective central state, then the nation, defined as the terminal community that "when the chips are down, commands men's loyalty",²³ is no longer a territorial state with tens of millions of people, but rather a small face-to-face group that can provide security, like the neighborhood defense groups into which the city of Belfast is subdivided. The retreat to a society of saue qui peut cannot be unlimited; if carried far enough it leads to anarchy, and a reaction imposing order in ways that cannot be the object of indifference.

VI META-PROBLEMS

Because the problems of governing are multiple, national politicians must often address themselves to the inter-connections and impact that problems--and proposed solutions--have upon each other. For example, the waste and inefficiency resulting from organized over-complexity would be of less concern to politicians if it were not for the fact that resources must be husbanded more carefully when government is overloaded with commitments. Similarly, politicians can live with considerable citizen indifference, provided that they have no reason to fear such indifference spilling over into value conflict.

Logically, we can analyze six different spillover problems between two conjoint challenges, and even more, if three or four challenges were assumed to reach a high level of intensity simultaneously.

1) Together, organized overcomplexity and citizen indifference could turn the practice of government into organized incompetence. Government activities spawning more and more complex organizations within government and networks relating one part of government to another within central

government, functionally distinct corporations, and regional and local government generates complexity. The decline of efficiency resulting from overcomplexity is likely to increase citizen indifference, as it becomes evident to wouldbe individual consumers that government is less and less competent to deliver the goods. In turn, increased indifference will make organizations of government more and more incompetent in mustering power to act purposefully in society.

Insofar as these two problems are pre-eminent, a government has several broad alternatives. It can seek to increase its organizational power, by finding a technical mechanism to 'unknot' its internal complexities, or it can try to substitute symbolic appeals for citizen involvement or identification with government, in place of instrumental boasts that government can deliver the goods. Alternatively, government may try to reduce its own complexity by a more or less radical internal re-organization, whether in the form of territorial devolution, or by substituting the provision of money benefits for public goods and services, so that citizens can shop around in the marketplace for the most efficient producers of what they (and, to a large extent, the government) wish them to have. Citizens may regard the crippling of government as a good thing, as an alternative entrenching power with themselves rather than concentrating more power in the hands of the new oligarchs heading the institutions of a corporate state.²⁴

2) A government overloaded with more commitments than its resources can meet faces value conflict only if the disputes about who gets what become transformed into non-bargainable conflicts. In an era of double affluence, this did not happen, since for a large proportion of its population government was augmenting rising private earnings with public benefits. In a period of low or even nil growth, additional public benefits become zero sum,

for they can only be provided by taxes reducing the incomes of other groups. Because decisions about public benefits and the taxes paying for them are made by government, the issue is collective. However, disputes about a pension increase or additions to social security taxes are not absolutes; they concern the state taking a small percentage more of money here, and giving a little more money there. As long as this is the only point at issue, they remain bargainable. The redistribution of earnings through the state becomes an absolute conflict, if it becomes translated into a question of the state's absolute right to power. In every society, there are some things a state is not expected to do or, in colloquial language, it would be 'illegitimate' to attempt to do, such as determine the size of every family.

A government confronted with demands to 'do something' about falling living standards, whether of the elderly and disadvantaged, industrial or public sector workers or the middle classes, finds itself vulnerable in proportion as it accepts and is accepted, as effectively responsible for the management of the economy. In the interwar period, for example, slumps and mass unemployment were regarded like Acts of Gods, and regimes could thus survive years of mass unemployment. We do not know to what extent government's contemporary responsibilities can be sustained in a period of managing economic 'bad news' rather than good news. For example, a nationally negotiated wages policy may not produce normative agreement on the 'just' wage, but it can produce satisfaction when everyone benefits to some extent. When government becomes a partner in negotiations that will lead to wage reductions in real terms, the absence of value consensus about 'just' cuts could lead to a breakdown of agreement.²⁵ In such circumstances, unions and employers would both flee from government regulations, seeking a return to the marketplace mechanisms, precisely because they are free-for-alls. Alternatively, if government is asked to

reconcile irreconcilable claims, it may try to paper over the problem through inflation, a palliative likely to be of only short-term benefit. If that fails, coercion might be required to produce compliance where normative consent is lacking.

Insofar as governments become overloaded because of worldwide problems of resource shortages, then the normative constraints upon challenges to authority are much weaker, for governments of countries deprived of basic resources (whether defined as oil or grain) might revert to force in pursuit of their aims. Mankind at the Turning Point 26 unintentionally emphasizes the possibility of this by recommending the resolution of allocation problems through a world government that does not exist. The comments about domestic politics made by editors of an anti-No Growth symposium are even more appropriate:

The fruits of policies that lead to growth are frequently shared, albeit often quite unequally and the opportunity to let the losers share in them is always there. In a society without growth or progress, by contrast, what the winners in fights over policy won, the losers, inevitably would lose. So the fights, presumably, would be mighty rough. 27

3) Compounding organized overcomplexity and overloaded resources is likely to cause rising ineffectiveness in government, just at a time when more efficiency is needed. Of itself, declining inefficiency is tolerable, provided that it does not make effectiveness the exception, rather than the rule. But when resources are in short supply, greater inefficiency does more than simply increase the cost of governing. It also increases the number of things that government must make its citizens do without.

4) When organized overcomplexity and value conflict co-occur, the results could be extreme for the established political authority. A regime that faces well organized opponents prepared to persist in their challenge to authority risks being repudiated if it cannot make

its authority effective, and another organization in society can. But a regime that faces non-(or dis)organized value conflicts may benefit from its own weakness. A government too weak to make its wishes effective cannot radicalize its opponents by applying coercion, for it lacks this power. Its very weakness may avoid giving disaffected opponents a stimulus to rebellion, or it may lead prudent governors to increase overcomplexity, in order to create institutions that vest sufficient powers in potential opponents to maintain benign indifference, or even support, for a regime that cannot be repressive. For example, the political processes of federalism that came into effect after the American Civil War and the failure of Reconstruction were not meant to increase efficiency, but to diminish the consequences of value conflicts.

5) If citizen indifference follows governmental overloading of resources, this may be regarded by governors as the lesser evil, if the alternative is the stimulation of an active value-conflict. On the face of it, civic indifference at times of economic recession might appear to produce lethargy in society. A market economist might hypothesize, however, that its effect would be the opposite. A government so inefficient as to overcome itself might well be suffering from organized overcomplexity. By disengaging from government citizens would then be losing the constraints of an inept state. Provided other circumstances were right, citizens might be able to use their newfound freedom from government interference to increase the rate of economic growth to their own certain benefit, and perhaps even to that of their governors. A historical study of rapid industrialization in Britain and Japan, and the opposite in France and China, concludes that it was such disengagement that made possible rapid economic growth free from the constraints of bureaucratic state regulation.

6) While the protagonists in a value conflict may portray their battle as that between Good and Evil, the mass of citizens may react

differently, wishing A Plague on Both Your Houses. For example, the sudden emergence of the Peace People in Northern Ireland in autumn, 1976, demonstrated that there were some values that united members of both communities in Northern Ireland, against the set antagonisms of their elected and paramilitary leaders. Citizen indifference does not protect a regime with its authority under challenge, but it does neutralize strata that might otherwise be active opponents. Moreover, a successor regime faces just as many problems of exercising authority in the face of indifference as its predecessor had.

* * *

Because governing is a permanent feature of modern society, it is not meaningful to speak of a 'crisis' of governability. A particular regime may sometimes fall at a time of crisis, but the problems of governing are perennial.

Ironically, the two challenges most likely to evoke consensus about the need to do something--organized overcomplexity and overloaded resources--are also inevitable constraints upon modern government. A massive government cannot expect to increase its complexity without risk of losing efficiency, just as a government with many commitments must always be sensitive to the limits of resources. In these terms, a country is well governed when its institutions manage to combine central authority with flexible and responsive, as well as efficient, delivery of goods and services. Good husbanding of resources is not a matter of spending a fixed low (or high) percentage of GNP through the public purse. Instead, as Mr. Micawber long ago pointed out, it is adjusting whatever commitments are made to the resources at hand.

Normative challenges to governors are not inevitable, as is demonstrated by the long periods of fully legitimate authority in many Western countries. When a regime lacks full legitimacy, politics does not cease. Instead, the relationship between governors and governed simply takes another form. Normative conflicts do not of themselves lead to the repudiation of a regime. As Juan Linz emphasizes, this results from "the government's incapacity to solve problems for which disloyal oppositions offer themselves as a solution."²⁸ In default of organized disloyalty, governors face citizen indifference, rather than rebellion. If an organized opposition develops by reducing the number of basic political laws requiring compliance--e.g., refusing to recognize the flying of illegal flags, or even parading by uniformed men--a regime may reduce tension and the risk of armed conflict. If such measures do not prevent conflict from erupting, then the regime of the day has forces of coercion at hand. Even if those who reject a regime's values succeed in supplanting their former governors, they do not resolve all value conflicts. They simply step into the position of rulers of a partially legitimate regime, and themselves face the problems of governing without consensus.

The most puzzling, and therefore the most interesting possible development is the growth of citizen indifference to government. If this happens, it violates many of the 'good government' norms of professional political scientists, for it implies organizational ineffectiveness as well as the normative dissociation of governors and governed. In the extreme, it threatens a Hobbesian nightmare of a world in which each contends against all. But the opposite of this may be equally a nightmare, a society in which the forces of Leviathan are everywhere used to constrain citizens from doing what they wish. The judgment made about civic indifference today is not so much a scientific judgment, as it is a judgment weighing governmental ineffectiveness as the guarantor of individual liberty against the need for effective organizational action to promote double affluence in the contemporary Mixed Economy Welfare State.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Richard Rose, "Dynamic Tendencies in the Authority of Regimes", World Politics XXI:4 (1969) for a full elaboration of concepts employed in this section.
2. For an empirical discussion of these signs of trouble, see Philippe C. Schmitter, "Associability and Governability" (Florence: European University Institute Colloquium on Overloaded Government, 12-17 December 1976), pp.5-9.
3. Michel J. Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington and Joji Watanuki, The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p.173. For another analysis, see S.M. Lipset, Political Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1960), Chap.3.
4. For the strict demand for compliance within revolutionary groups, see the complementary studies of the IRA by J. Bowyer Bell, The Secret Army (London: Sphere Books, 1972) and Sean MacStiofain, Memoirs of a Revolutionary (London: Gordon Cremonesi, 1975).
5. For theoretical and applied studies querying whether bigger units are more efficient in government, see e.g. L.R. Gabler, "Economies and Diseconomies of Scale in Urban Public Sectors", Land Economics XLVII (1971), and Vincent Ostrom, The Political Theory of a Compound Republic (Blacksburg, Va.: Centre for the Study of Public Choice, 1971).
6. Cf. Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (New York: Free Press, 1966) and Todd LaPorte, ed., Organized Social Complexity (Princeton: University Press, 1975).
7. For a historical documentation, see Richard Rose, "On the Priorities of Government: a Developmental Analysis of Public Policies", European Journal of Political Research IV (1976) pp.247-89.
8. See S.P. Huntington, "PostIndustrial Politics: How Benign Will It Be?", Comparative Politics VI: 2 (1974).
9. Assar Lindbeck, Swedish Economic Policy (London: Macmillan, 1975), p.235.
10. Cf. Theodore Lowi, The End of Liberalism (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969) and C.E. Lindblom, The Intelligence of Democracy (New York: Free Press, 1965).
11. Cf. D.H. Meadows et al., The Limits to Growth (New York: Universe Books, 1972) and H.S.D. Cole et al., Models of Doom: a Critique of the Limits of Growth (New York: Universe Books, 1973).
12. See Richard Rose and B. Guy Peters, "Can Government Go Bankrupt? a Preliminary Inquiry into Political Overload" (Florence: European University Institute Colloquium, 1976), and a forthcoming book by the same title.
13. Cf. James E. Webb, Space Age Management: the Large Scale Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1969), and Richard Rose, "Disciplined Research and Undisciplined Problems", International Social Science Journal XXVIII:1 (1976).

14. The discussion in this section draws heavily upon Richard Rose, Governing without Consensus (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), Chaps.14-15. See also, by the same author, Northern Ireland: Time of Choice (London: Macmillan, 1976) Chap.7.
15. Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1970), p.101.
16. See Richard Rose and Derek W. Urwin, Regional Differentiation and Political Unity in Western Nations (London: Sage Professional Paper in Contemporary Political Sociology Number 06-007, 1975), Table 3.
17. See W.H. Morris-Jones, "In Defence of Apathy: Some Doubts on the Duty to Vote", Political Studies II:1 (1954); and, on intermediate organizations, William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959).
18. Erwin K. Scheuch, Wird die Bundesrepublik Unregierbar? (Cologne: Arbeitgeberverband der Metallindustrie, 1976). Scheuch's approach to the problem is particularly relevant to the whole of this section.
19. Cf. D.A. Kavanagh, "The Deferential English: a Comparative Critique", Government and Opposition VI: 3 (1971).
20. The Crisis of Democracy, p.93.
21. Michel J. Crozier, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon (Chicago: University Press, 1964).
22. Cf. Arend Lijphart, The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1st and 2nd editions, 1968 and 1975).
23. Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p.95.
24. Cf. James S. Coleman, Power and the Structure of Society (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1974) and D.A. Kavanagh, "The Labours of Sisyphus: Political Leadership and Overload", (Florence: European University Institute Colloquium, 1976).
25. See John H. Goldthorpe, "Social Inequality and Social Integration in Modern Britain", in Richard Rose, ed., Studies in British Politics (London: Macmillan, 1976, 3rd edition).
26. Mihajlo Mesarovic and Eduard Pestel, Mankind at the Turning Point (London: Hutchinson, 1975).
27. Mancur Olson, H.H. Landsberg and Joseph L. Fisher, "Epilogue" to The No-Growth Society, ed. Mancur Olson and H.H. Landsberg (London: Woburn Press, 1975), p.241.
28. J.J. Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown and Re-equilibration of Competitive Democracies" (New Haven: Yale University, unpublished manuscript, c. 1975) p.75.



